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Application No.: 09/894,203

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Docket No.: 299002053200

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 were pending in the present application. By virtue of this response, claim 1 has been amended, no claims have been cancelled and no new claims have been added.

Accordingly, claims 1-10 are currently under consideration. Amendment and cancellation of certain claims is not to be construed as a dedication to the public of any of the subject matter of the claims as previously presented. No new matter has been added.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-3, 6, and 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by Kasai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,229,731, hereinafter the Kasai reference). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection as it applies to the amended claims.

Applicant submits that the Kasai reference fails to disclose each and every element recited in the amended independent claim 1. In particular, the Kasai reference fails to disclose at least the following elements: 1) a key means comprising a security release key, 2) a lock means comprising a security registration lock, and 3) a determination circuit for generating a security release signal using the security release key and the security registration lock.

In the Office Action dated August 11, 2005, the Examiner stated that "the Applicant's paragraph regarding why the present invention provides better data protection provides a wealth of information regarding the differences between the Prior Art cited by the Examiner and the present invention, but it is not part of the claims." In consistent with the Examiner's responses to Applicant's previous arguments, the amended independent claim 1 specifically points out the elements that are not found in the Prior Art references. As included in the amended claim 1 and described in Figure 1 and its corresponding explanations, the semiconductor storage device of the present invention includes at least a security release key (the key), a security registration lock (the lock), and a determination circuit. The key is stored in a region of a non-volatile memory cell array block along with the data to be protected. Meanwhile, the lock is stored in a separate non-volatile memory. In order to access the protected data, the key and the lock have to "match", where the

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"match" is determined by the determination circuit. The determination circuit may be implemented by subjecting the key and the lock to a predetermined mathematical operation, such as a unidirectional hash conversion (see page 22, lines 20-25). Therefore, even if either the key or the lock is illegally obtained or tampered by an unauthorized user, the data is still protected as both the key and the lock are required to access the data. In addition, since mathematical operations are used to "match" the key and the lock in the determination circuit, it is very hard to reverse-engineer the mathematical operations. These elements of claim 1 are not disclosed in the Kasai reference. It is respectfully submitted that the amended independent claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-10 are allowable over the Kasai reference.

The support for the amendment can be found on page 21 at lines 18-21, and page 22 at lines 5-7 and 11-16 of the present specification.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kasai et al. as applied to claim 2 above and further in view of Matsuo et al. (5,974,513). For the reasons presented above, since the Kasai reference does not anticipate each and every elements of the amended base claim 1, which claims 2 and 4 depend from, claim 4 can not be found obvious over Kasai in view of Matsuo.

Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kasai et al. (6,229,731) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Arai (6,543,017). For the reasons presented above, since the Kasai reference does not anticipate each and every elements of the amended base claim 1, which claim 5 depends from, claim 5 can not be found obvious over Kasai in view of Arai.

Claims 7 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Araki et al. (5,374,847). For the reasons presented above, since the Kasai reference does not anticipate each and every elements of the amended base claim 1, which claims 7 and 8 depend from, claims 7 and 8 can not be found obvious over Kasai in view of Araki.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 299002053200. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

Dated: January 10, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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